**Outline of the proposed synopsis entitled as**

# Problem of Identity in the Select Novels of Anees Salim: A Postmodern Study

**Submitted to**

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# Resume

**Introduction:**

In his modern literary vision Salim challenges deep-seated beliefs about themes and techniques and unpacks its many layers. He says or writes his life experience of growing up as an Indian Muslim and describes in his novels.

As a postmodern novelist, Salim has told stories of small towns, mohallas and obscure characters that are largely Muslims and otherwise are ignored, little understood or misunderstood. Within ten years into his literary career, and seven books to credit, Salim has become an indispensable part of English fiction in India. He became an acclaimed writer with the publication of his book *Tales from a Vending Machine*, a novel about the daily travails of Hasina Mansoor, a young Muslim hijabi girl who works as a vending machine assistant at an airport.

All of Salim's novels trace his own journey through different social settings and his encounter with various real-life characters. In *Vanity Bagh*, he depicted the social side of Hindu-Muslim conflict North-Indian milieu. He says researching and working on the novel was a sort of rediscovery of India where Muslims are subjected to a grim test. Besides, introducing Muslim characters and mohalls, Salim has explored life in small towns. All his books are loaded with social and political concerns, but Salim insists that more than politics, he prefers to focus more on human cries than political noises.

Over the years, his novels have been translated into several languages and won several awards, including The Hindu Literary Prize for Best Fiction 2013 for *Vanity Bagh*, the 2014 Raymond Crossword Book Award for Best Fiction for *The Blind Lady's Descendants,* the 2018 Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award, and the 2017 Atta Galatta-Bangalore Literature Festival Book Prize for Best Fiction for *The Small Town Sea*. In Anees Salim's marvellous *Vanity Bagh*—narrated by a young man named Imran, who lives in the Muslim colony that gives the book its title—a tree standing opposite a mosque is called Franklin, after the priest who planted it a century earlier. "The mohalla-wallahs are so obsessed with spinning yarns and naming things that they haven't spared even this tree," Imran tells us early in the book. But having provided this disinterested commentary, he himself continues to refer to the tree by its name.

But there are deeper resonances to Imran's remark about the naming or defining of things. He and his friends have the names of famous Pakistani politicians or cricket stars: "The mohalla-wallahs always named their children after people with successful professions." And as he tells his story—including the sequence of events that leads to his group becoming pawns in a terrorist act—he adorns the text with little things said by various people, presented as quotations, complete with their name at the bottom and their year of birth and death in brackets. Imran's obsession with numbers and dates is clarified later in the book: We learn that he tries to make sense of things and people by giving them finite shape and meaning and a back-story. At a broader level, this idea can be extended to the terrain of religion, which is an unavoidable presence in this story; yarn-spinning and labelling done by people thousands of years ago has created a situation where two human colonies in the same city, located just minutes apart, might come to see each other only in terms of their singular Hindu and Muslim identities. (If Vanity Bagh, nicknamed Little Pakistan, is the Muslim colony in the book's unnamed city, its names is a Hindu neighbourhood called Mehendi.)

One of his latest novels, *The Odd Book of Baby Names* (Penguin India), explores familial bonds between an eccentric king, one of the last kings of India who is dying, as eight of his 100 rumoured children "trace the savage lies of their father and reckon with the burdens of their lineage."

Another recently published novel, *The Bellboy*, which has also been published in the UK by Holland House Books, narrates the life of a 17-year-old Latif on a small island where he is appointed as a bellboy in a hotel where people come to die. After his father's death, drowned in the waters surrounding their small island, the boy has to provide for his ailing mother and sisters. Latif's life changes when he finds the corpse of a small-time actor in one of the hotel rooms.

**Modernism and Postmodernism**:

Modernism is a term, a literary and cultural and an international movement. It flourished in the first four decades of the 20$^{th}$ century. This era reflects a sense of cultural crisis which was both exciting and disquieting, in that it opened up a new vista of human possibilities at the same time as putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating new ideas. Modernism is a revolt against the conservative values of realism. It is marked by experimentation,

particularly manipulation of form, and by the realization that knowledge is not absolute. Postmodernism of 1970s is a continuation and revolt against modernist ideas. The selected novels of Anees Salim are explored in the light of characteristics of modernism.

In sum, the present research is going to focus on the problem of identity in the select novels of Salim. Hence, the researcher will study some primary sources by Anees Salim in that, *The Vicks Mango Tree* (2012), *Tales from Vending Machine (2013)*, *Vanity Bagh* (2013), *The Blind Lady's Descendants* (2014), *The Small-Town Sea* (2017), *The Odd Book of Baby Names* (2021) and *The Bellboy* (2022) and some related secondary texts as source for research.

**Review of Literature:**

Review of literature is very crucial part of the research. Hence, the researcher has tried to review the previous literature in the field. There are some research papers and articles are available on the topic but it is a need of a comprehensive research.

**Subha M. (2016)** in her article *'Reflection of Postmodern Threat Called Terrorism in Anees Salim's Vanity Bagh'* says, Postmodern world is threatened by the dangers caused by 'terrorism', 'world war', 'airplane high jacking', 'bomb blasting, brutal assaults', 'racism', etc. Apart from the fact that 'post-modernism' is diagnosed by the Western developed countries and disseminated throughout the entire world with the assistance of computer and internet. It explains the plurality of living. It paves way to the existence of both the Ex-Colonizer and the post- colonial. Thus, Indian writing in English gains more momentum at present. The threats faced in India are peculiar as its multi- ethnicity. As a developing country the economic pressures are always constant. On the other hand, corruption chases the qualified personnel to immigrate where their intelligence will get a better earning without paying a huge amount as bribe. The entrepreneurs find it difficult to produce the goods at a competitive cost with good quality with the maximum of imported raw materials. Production in the agricultural field is yet to be improved in order to raise the 'export' ratio against 'import. Terrorism slips through easily at the cost of economic benefit. This terrorism victimizes the hired innocent persons. They are manipulated under the name of God or money.

**Asha Mary Abraham** in her article **(2018)** 'Vanity Bagh – A Vanity bag opened into a 'Tiny Pakistan' in India' says, Vanity Bagh is an enticing tale about a little mohalla in India, where the Muslim characters in the novel recount their past, while their life goes out of hands in the prison.

The prison gives them time to ruminate about their past and their flaws, creating the narrative plot of the novel. The novel is set in the backdrop of a series of terrorist attacks, blasts and widespread Islamophobia. The tone of the novel makes it a light read though it tells a bleak story. The deceptively light narration creates intricate sketches of everyday Indian lives. The novel, though lags initially, picks up speed and soon becomes un-put-down-able. Halfway through the novel, the reader begins to empathize with Imran Jabbari, in spite of the fact that he is a criminal, convicted of terrorist activity

**Jay Arjun Sing** in his article **(2015)** 'Labels and rebels in Anees Salim's novels' says, When I say that one of the funniest words, I have encountered in a recent Indian novel is 'Franklin', further explanation is clearly required. In Anees Salim's marvellous *Vanity Bagh*—narrated by a young man named Imran, who lives in the Muslim colony that gives the book its title—a tree standing opposite a mosque is called Franklin, after the priest who planted it a century earlier. "The mohalla-wallahs are so obsessed with spinning yarns and naming things that they haven't spared even this tree," Imran tells us early in the book. But having provided this disinterested commentary, he himself continues to refer to the tree by its name. Soon I was grinning at every occurrence of a throwaway line like "we were idling our time away by Franklin" or "under Franklin stood Mary Pinto, seriously irritated".

**Statement of Proposed Problem:**

Anees Salim speaks of the minority community and the experiences of Indian Muslims through various Muslim characters. The minority groups in Inda face the problem of identity in this postmodern world.

**Scope and Limitation of Research:**

In modern era, means after the modernization of India, Salim used various subjects, themes and theories in his works hence, the researcher has to study and understand them in postmodern context. The researcher will study the novels of Anees Salim *The Vicks Mango Tree* (2012), *Tales from Vending Machine (2013), Vanity Bagh* (2013), *The Blind Lady's Descendants* (2014), *The Small-Town Sea* (2017), *The Odd Book of Baby Names* (2021) and *The Bellboy* (2022).

**Significance of the Study:**

Anees Salim has expressed modern life of minority community in his books. The titles of his novels are very suggestive. His novel opens to reveal many lives unheard and unthinkable of and explores the life and foibles of everyday characters. The novels have its share of dark humour. However, the optimistic tone that emerges from the Salim's novels will be helpful to maintain the communal harmony.

**Objectives of the Research:**

1. To study Anees Salim's works through modern and postmodern approaches.
2. To understand the fluid and fractured identity of minority represented by Anees Salim in his novels.
3. To study the problem of loss and hopelessness with the major characters of Anees Salim.
4. To interpret the socio-political life of small town and mini-Pakistan highlighted in the fiction of Salim.
5. To explore the ways in which Salim's literary fiction address the issues of power, resistance and ethnicity.
6. To examine the elements of modernity and postmodernity in the novels of Salim.

**Hypothesis:**

1. Anees Salim novels represent the problem of identity and loss.
2. Salim has started new thematic movement in novel.
3. The postmodern writings of Anees Salim bring out the issues of power, resistance, and hopelessness.
4. Anees Salim speaks very boldly on the issue of religious polarisation.
5. Muslim characters play very crucial role in Anees Salim's novels.

**Research Methodology:**

For the present study, emphasis is laid on a very close reading and study of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the books of Anees Salim in that, *The Vicks Mango Tree* (2012), *Tales from Vending Machine (2013)*, *Vanity Bagh* (2013), *The Blind Lady's Descendants* (2014), *The Small-Town Sea* (2017), *The Odd Book of Baby Names* (2021) and *The Bellboy* (2022) and other original texts and the works of other authors, speeches, various magazines, newspaper articles are used for the research as secondary data sources. Data is collected from the various sources. The data regarding the research is taken from various sites, journals, magazines, newspapers, books and articles. The analytical, critical, and descriptive interpretative

methods will be followed. The texts will be interpreted by using the modern and post-modern theories.

**Tentative Chapter Scheme:**

**Chapter I: Introduction**

The first chapter of the research will be introductory. The chapter will cover introduction, review of literature, objectives, hypothesis, research methodology, and chapter scheme etc. Introduction of the author is the initial part of the research. Then the chapter will focus basic themes and techniques of modern and postmodern theory. To sum, the first introductory chapter will provide research frame for further research.

**Chapter II: Problem of Identity in Post-Modern Fictional World of Anees Salim**

The second chapter of the project will focus on the concept of modernity, postmodernity and identity. It will study the problem of loss and hopelessness with the major characters of Anees Salim. It will also bring out identity crisis deeply rooted in the post-modern society.

**Chapter III: Narratives of Nation and Nationality**

The socio-political life of small town and mini-Pakistan highlighted in the fiction of Salim will be at the centre of this third chapter. It will focus on his narration about nation and nationality with selected novels.

**Chapter IV: Discourse of Resistance and Power**

The fourth chapter of the research will explore the ways in which Salim's literary fiction address the issues of power, resistance and ethnicity.

**Chapter V: Conclusion**

The fifth and final chapter of the research will be the soul of research. On the basis of above four chapters, its output, arguments, points and issues certain conclusion will be drawn. This chapter will bring together all the arguments and critical comments.

**Bibliography**

**Primary Resources:**


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